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MUNICIPAL ART AT CINCINNATI

creasing success until 1847, when the attendance began to fall off. The Art Union had inaugurated free exhibitions, and purchased largely and liberally from the artists. They had attractive rooms on Broadway, with no stairs to mount. We were at the top of the Society Library Building—a long climb. The Art Union secured many pictures. Their galleries were thronged. We were fast drifting to a state of embarrassment. In this emergency two old friends of our Society, and intimate with Durand, then president, came forward to our rescue. They were Jonathan Sturges and Charles M. Leupp. They brought the light of their countenances into the shadowed valley of humiliation.

We had no building of our own; our casts were in a dreary loft in Thirteenth street. We were obliged to pay high rents, and to change from one upper floor to another as leases expired. These two merchant princes joined with Durand, Cummings and Edmonds, and pledged their credit to raise a large fund by bonds, they furnishing the greater part of it as a building fund. Several lots on Mercer street were bought, one house on Broadway was secured on a long lease for an entrance, and before long we had a spacious suite of galleries, reached by only a short flight of stairs. They were admirably arranged, and there for several years the exhibitions flourished, until the property was sold for a profit of \$68,000. This enabled us to buy the lot on Twenty-third street, on which the present building was erected. All the property of the old American Academy came to the hammer in 1841, to satisfy claims of Dr. Hosack's estate, and the entire collection of casts was bought by our treasurer for \$400, and is now in constant use by our students.

The building which has been occupied by the Academy for the past thirty years has long been insufficient for the greatly enlarged needs of an institution which should be the home of the Arts and the centre of their refining and elevating influence. The spacious galleries, lecture-room and schools, as designed for a new building, will nobly provide space for our exhibitions, lectures and various studios on a scale proportioned to the city and country which it hopes to serve, honor and adorn.

THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY OF CINCINNATI

THE object of this Society is to provide appropriate sculptural, pictorial or other decorations for the public buildings and parks in the City of Cincinnati, and otherwise to encourage high artistic standards. Annual members pay five dollars yearly. Life membership is secured by the payment of fifty dollars. The Society has already installed a Venetian well-head, given by Mr. Larz Anderson, as a drinking-fountain in Eden Park, and is now providing a decoration for the entrance vestibule of the City Hall. This work, a figure composition, covering about 790 square feet of painted surface, ceiling and walls, is being executed by Otto Walter Beck, and it is so far completed that its installation before the end of the present year is expected.

The President's report, presented at the annual meeting, held on April 24, shows that there is a balance in the treasury of \$1,667.71. The remaining obligation under the City Hall contract is \$1,450. The balance above this, together with the dues of the next year, will enable the trustees to consider a further undertaking, either amplifying the present one or starting upon new lines. Realizing that a long time is necessarily required for carrying out decorative projects of the magnitude of the present one, the trustees suggest the policy of carrying on not only large works requiring years for completion, but also of doing some small but suitable thing each year. For example, it is suggested to arrange for the modeling and cutting in metal dies of a seal for the city, bringing the features of the present coat-of-arms into artistic arrangement. Such a seal might be recommended to the city authorities for adoption, and its appearance upon official documents would be a pleasant variation from the seals now in use, while in larger form it would properly take its place upon public buildings.

Another suggestion is a design for poles carrying electric wires. "As long as we seem likely," says the report, "to have overhead wires, either for trolley or other power or light for some time to come, the poles form so conspicuous a feature of our streets that the effort is worth while to give them an artistic char-

MEMORIAL HALL, BOSTON

acter. The designs should be first of all thoroughly practical, with the artistic features conforming to the use. It would be then reasonable to hope for its general and voluntary adoption for all new work at least. These are suggestions for the expenditure of a smaller part of our income while the bulk of it is being absorbed in the progress of such a work as the present at the City Hall. All such undertakings will almost necessarily be spread over some years in their execution, and meantime it seems expedient to keep the interest in our work alive by these more frequent evidences of activity, until we have a much larger annual income."

The report is signed by the president of the Society, Mr. W. W. Taylor.



PROPOSED COMPETITION FOR MURAL PAINTINGS IN THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE

By request of a number of artists, the Committee on State-house of the Massachusetts Legislature, reopened the hearing upon the appropriation for the purchase of five mural paintings for the Memorial Hall and one for the outside. The chairman read a letter signed by Walter Gilman Page, John Wesley Breck, Edmund T. Tarbell, Joseph De Camp, William M. Paxton, Frank W. Benson, H. H. Gallison and E. W. D. Hamilton, asking for the privilege of being heard. Mr. Page stated that Mr. Endicott, of the State-house Commission, had given at least one artist, Mr. Simmons, to understand that his work would be acceptable, and, on investigation, it was found that Mr. Simmons had spent many years in Paris and is a resident of New York. The Boston artists, he said, asked only for the privilege of entering in competition with other artists; they did not insist that their designs should be accepted, but they were of recognized ability and did not want to be ignored. He did not think that the matter of price should cut any figure in the selection. He understood that this committee could only recommend, as there was no bill pending in the matter. Gen. Charles G. Loring said he regretted to appear in opposition to the

artists. A competition on the grandest scale had been held in the Congressional Library at Washington, which Mr. Endicott had visited, and he had told Messrs. Walker and Simmons that if it were in his power he would engage their services. These gentlemen had, acting upon this encouragement, prepared some designs. These men were Massachusetts men, trained in Boston, which city they had left for greater recognition elsewhere. "The hearing was closed," says the *Transcript*, "without further action, leaving the artists, as they said, in the delicate position of feeling that they had been ignored, yet unable to take any further steps in the matter without danger of doing injustice to brother artists of unquestioned ability and who have gone ahead with their designs in good faith."

The Committee on State-house, apparently as a result of this protest, subsequently made a report recommending the appointment of a commission of seven persons, four of whom are to be artists resident in the United States, to act as a jury. Within fifteen days from the passage of the act the Governor and Council are to advertise in the leading papers of the country the fact that \$25,000 has been appropriated for this purpose, and all artists who are residents of the United States are to be invited to submit designs. The designs must all be submitted before January 15, 1900, to be placed on exhibition fifteen days. They are not to bear the names of their designers, but the name of each will be placed in a sealed envelope, to be opened after the design has been accepted. The Treasurer is authorized to pay \$5,000 to the artist for each of the five designs accepted, after completion and being placed in Memorial Hall.

* * *

Now, quite apart from the fact that those in authority have proceeded quite far in negotiations with Mr. Simmons, who is one of our foremost mural painters and a Massachusetts man, born and bred, this proposition of the committee is open to many objections. In the first place it is pretty generally conceded, and this after a full ventilation of the matter, that the most proper form of competition is to invite a few well-known men to offer designs and to compensate them for their labor. Successful artists cannot afford to go into competitions without compensation. The result is